

HOW BILLS BECOME LAWS

- ◎ A Bill is a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law that is presented for debate before Parliament.
- ◎ Bills are introduced in either the House of Commons or House of Lords for examination, discussion and amendment.
- ◎ When both Houses have agreed on the content of a Bill it is then presented to the reigning monarch for approval (known as Royal Assent). Once Royal Assent is given a Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and is law.

First reading (Lords)

- ⦿ First reading is the first stage of a Bill's passage through the House of Lords - usually a formality, it takes place without debate.
- ⦿ First reading of a Bill can take place at any time in a parliamentary session.
- ⦿ The long title (indicating the content of the Bill) is read out by the Member of the Lords in charge of the Bill.
- ⦿ Once formally introduced, the Bill is printed.

Second reading (Lords)

- ⦿ Second reading is an opportunity for Members of the Lords to debate the main principles and purpose of the Bill and to flag up concerns and areas where they think changes (amendments) are needed.
- ⦿ A Bill's second reading usually takes place no less than two weekends after first reading.
- ⦿ Any Member can speak in the debate so this stage can indicate those Members particularly interested in the Bill - or a particular aspect of it - and those who are most likely to be involved in amending the Bill at later stages.
- ⦿ Second reading debates usually last for a few hours but sometimes stretch over a couple of days.

Committee stage (Lords)

- ⦿ Detailed line by line examination of the separate parts (clauses and schedules) of the Bill takes place during committee stage. Any Member of the Lords can take part.
- ⦿ Committee stage can last for one or two days to eight or more. It usually starts no fewer than two weeks after the second reading.
- ⦿ If the Bill has been amended (исправлен) it is reprinted with all the agreed amendments.

Report stage (Lords)

- ⦿ Report stage in the Chamber gives all Members of the Lords further opportunity to consider all amendments (proposals for change) to a Bill.
- ⦿ Report stage usually starts 14 days after committee stage. It can be spread over several days (but usually fewer days than at committee stage).
- ⦿ Detailed line by line examination of the Bill continues.
- ⦿ Votes can take place and any Member of the Lords can take part.

Third reading (Lords)

- ◎ Third reading in the Chamber is the final chance for the Lords to debate and change the contents of the Bill.
- ◎ At least three sitting days usually pass between report stage and third reading.
- ◎ Unlike the Commons, amendments can be made at this stage.
- ◎ Amendments at third reading in the Lords are often used to clarify specific parts of the Bill.

Consideration of amendments

- ◉ When a Bill has passed through third reading in both Houses it is returned to the first House (where it started) for the second House's amendments (proposals for change) to be considered.
- ◉ Both Houses must agree on the exact wording of the Bill.
- ◉ If the Commons makes amendments to the Bill, the Lords must consider them and either agree or disagree to the amendments or make alternative proposals.
- ◉ If the Lords disagrees with any Commons amendments, or makes alternative proposals, then the Bill is sent back to the Commons.
- ◉ A Bill may go back and forth between each House ('Ping Pong') until both Houses reach agreement.

Royal Assent

- ◉ When a Bill has completed all its parliamentary stages in both Houses, it must have Royal Assent before it can become an Act of Parliament (law).
- ◉ Royal Assent is the Monarch's agreement to make the Bill into an Act and is a formality.